

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 20695 291405Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6151
INFO USICA WASHDC
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, UR
SUBJECT: PRESS INQUIRIES ON EMBASSY SQUATTERS

1. DAN FISHER OF THE LA TIMES AND CHARLES
BIERBAUER OF ABC WERE THE FIRST LOCAL NEWSMEN
TO BECOME AWARE OF THE ABSENCE FROM THE CON-
SULATE LOBBY OF THE PENTECOSTALISTS AND MRS.
OVSEPYAN AND HER TWO SONS. THEY SPOKE WITH THE
P&C COUNSELOR AT 1230 MOSCOW TIME, WITH UNDER-
STANDING THAT SOURCING WOULD BE AS FOR STANDARD
EMBASSY BRIEFINGS--NOT TO THE EMBASSY OR TO A
SPOKESMAN OR TO UNDEFINED EMBASSY SOURCES.

2. NEWSMEN KNOW LOCATION OF GROUP OF TEN IN THE
TRANSIENT APARTMENT, THAT THEY WENT WILLINGLY,
THAT THEY HAD EXPRESSED WISH OVER PERIOD OF TIME
NOT TO BE BURDEN ON EMBASSY, NOT TO DISTURB ITS
NORMAL WORK. AS IT BECAME APPARENT THAT GROUP
DID NOT INTEND TO DEPART, ACCOMMODATIONS OTHER
THAN CONSULAR LOBBY WERE SOUGHT. IN THIS
CROWDED EMBASSY THERE IS ONLY THE ONE TRANSIENT
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 20695 291405Z

APARTMENT, WHICH WE HAVE GIVEN TO THE GROUP.
FOOD, TOWELS, BEDDING, ETC., WILL BE PROVIDED.
THE APARTMENT HAS COOKING FACILITIES AND A
PRIVATE BATHROOM WITH SHOWER STALL. NEWSMEN
ALSO KNOW THAT GROUP IS SUPPOSED TO KEEP
APARTMENT DOOR LOCKED, AS IN CONSULAR LOBBY
AFTER HOURS, AFTER DEPARTURE PUBLIC. THEY ALSO

KNOW THAT GROUP IS ALLOWED OUT EVERY DAY INTO EMBASSY'S BACK YARD, FOR STROLL AND TO GET AIR.

3. COUNSELOR WAS ASKED WHETHER SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICER HAD ASKED THE GROUP TO LEAVE ON THE WEEKEND. HE ANSWERED AS FOLLOWS, DRAWING FROM PARA 38, STATE 217784, BUT NOT INDICATING THE AMBASSADOR'S ROLE, SINCE THIS WAS NOT ASKED: "AS PART OF OUR ONGOING EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE MATTER OF THE SIT-INS IN THE CONSULAR LOBBY, A SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICER SPOKE WITH THEM THIS WEEKEND. THE EMBASSY OFFICER EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE PENTECOSTALISTS AND FOR MRS. OVSEPYAN'S PLIGHT BUT NOTED THAT THEIR CONTINUED STAY IN THE EMBASSY WAS NOT HELPING THEMSELVES AND, IN THE PENTECOSTALISTS' CASE, WAS NOT HELPING THEIR FELLOW PENTECOSTALISTS IN THE SOVIET UNION. HE NOTED THAT THE SIT-INS WERE MAKING MORE DIFFICULT THE EMBASSY'S TASK OF ASSISTING OTHERS WHO ALSO NEED AND DESERVE THE EMBASSY'S HELP. IT WAS STRESSED THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ASSIST THESE PEOPLES' DESIRE TO EMIGRATE AND THAT THE EMBASSY WOULD KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THEIR CASES. HOWEVER, THE PENTECOSTALISTS AND MRS. OVSEPYAN, DESPITE THIS MOST RECENT REQUEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 20695 291405Z

THAT THEY LEAVE, DECIDED TO REMAIN."

4. BIERBAUER AND FISHER HAD OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION VASHCHENKO WHO, CONTRARY TO AGREED ARRANGEMENTS, PERMITTED THEM TO ENTER TRANSIENT APARTMENT.

5. OTHER QUESTIONS RAISED HAVE TO DO WITH (A) CONTACT BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT ON THIS MATTER, TO WHICH WE HAVE REPLIED THAT WE PREFER NOT TO CHARACTERIZE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND THE EMBASSY; (B) WERE THE SIT-INS THREATENED, TO WHICH WE HAVE REPLIED THAT THEY AGREED TO MOVE WITHOUT ANY ARGUMENT; (C) WHICH EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE INVOLVED IN COMMUNICATING SPECIFIC MESSAGES TO THE SIT-INS THIS PAST WEEKEND, TO WHICH WE HAVE REPLIED CONSULAR AND POLITICAL SECTIONS TASKED WITH LIAISON WITH SIT-INS BUT WE WILL NOT SINGLE OUT INDIVIDUALS.

6. FYI: VASHCHENKO HAS TOLD BIERBAUER AND FISHER THAT IT WAS ACTING POL COUNSELOR COMBS

AND CONSULAR COUNSELOR GROSS WHO DELIVERED
MESSAGES THIS PAST WEEKEND, TO WHICH EMBASSY
OFFERED NO COMMENT. GARRISON

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